

Meeting Date: November 5-7, 2008

Agenda Item No.

Agenda Item: Snake River White Sturgeon
Management Plan

Bureau Chief Approval: _____

Prepared by: Scott A. Grunder, Fishery Program Coordinator

Background: At the July 2008 Commission meeting, the Fisheries Bureau was given consent by the Fish and Game Commission to conduct a 30-day public review period for our Draft "Management Plan for the Conservation of Snake River White Sturgeon in Idaho." We solicited for public comment on the draft plan and received responses from the general public, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Idaho Power Company, and the Nez Perce Tribe. Comments from the public have been summarized along with the Department's responses. We include letters from the agencies and Nez Perce Tribe for Commission review. Their comments, as appropriate, have been incorporated into the final management plan. Snake River white sturgeon have declined across their historical range in Idaho for a number of reasons. The historical range of white sturgeon in the Snake River is from Shoshone Falls near the city of Twin Falls, Idaho downriver into the Columbia River. This management plan summarizes historical and current information on Snake River white sturgeon. It describes their status with respect to abundance, trends, and an evaluation of limiting factors to the species. We present management objectives by river reach in the plan that will be implemented in collaboration with key agency partners and other important stakeholders.

Statutory Authority and/or Policy Issues: The Management Plan for the Conservation of Snake River White Sturgeon in Idaho describes how the Department intends to manage and conserve this important game fish as per its mission found in Idaho Code Section 36-103. The Department's strategic plan has a goal to "Improve public understanding of and involvement in fish and wildlife management." This plan sets management direction for conservation of Snake River white sturgeon. The Commission sets policy and provides direction, considers input from the public, and has the authority to adopt, amend, or reject Department-recommended plans. The Fisheries Bureau solicited public and agency comments on the management plan. Having done that and incorporating comments as appropriate, the Fisheries Bureau is seeking Commission adoption of the Snake River white sturgeon management plan.

Public Involvement Process: The Department posted the Snake River white sturgeon management plan on its website and issued a news release notifying the public and agency partners that the management plan was ready for review. All involved Department regions and Mr. Grunder made personal contacts soliciting comment on the plan. Additionally, four open houses were held at Department facilities. We accepted comments on the plan for a 30-day period from early August through early September 2008.

Staff Recommendation: The Fisheries Bureau is seeking Commission action to adopt the Management Plan for Conservation of Snake River White Sturgeon in Idaho as an official Department species management plan.

Justification: We believe this management plan offers the best available scientific information and necessary conservation actions that will allow the Department and other key stakeholders to effectively manage, conserve, and protect this species and its habitats in Idaho. White sturgeon are an important sport fish in Idaho.

